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Labour Force, Australia

Headline estimates of employment, unemployment, underemployment, participation and hours worked from the monthly Labour Force Survey

Reference period May 2021

Released 17/06/2021

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Key statistics

Seasonally adjusted estimates for May 2021:

- Unemployment rate decreased to 5.1%.
- Participation rate increased to 66.2%.
- Employment increased to 13,125,100.

- Employment to population ratio increased to 62.8%.
- Underemployment rate decreased to 7.4%.
- Monthly hours worked increased by 25 million hours.

	Apr-2021	May-2021	Monthly change	Monthly change (%)	Yearly change	Yearly change (%)
Seasonally adjusted						
Employed people	13,010,000	13,125,100	115,200	0.9%	987,200	8.1%
Unemployed people	754,100	701,100	-53,000	-7.0%	-215,400	-23.5%
Unemployment rate	5.5%	5.1%	-0.4 pts	na	-1.9 pts	na
Underemployment rate	7.8%	7.4%	-0.3 pts	na	-5.5 pts	na
Participation rate	65.9%	66.2%	0.3 pts	na	3.6 pts	na
Monthly hours worked in all jobs	1,789 million	1,814 million	25 million	1.4%	208 million	13.0%

Estimates of changes throughout this release are calculated using un-rounded level estimates and may be different from, but are more accurate than, movements obtained from the rounded level estimates.

Survey impacts and changes

Quarterly rebenchmarking of labour force statistics

The ABS has revised the original Labour Force series for the previous two years to reflect the latest available preliminary and final estimates of the Estimated Resident Population. This quarterly process ensures that the Labour Force series promptly reflect any change in population trends and minimises the size of revisions that can occur when the series are rebenchmarking following each Census of Population and Housing.

In response to COVID-19 related changes in travel, the ABS has been revising preliminary Net Overseas Migration estimates more frequently. Net Overseas Migration estimates are a component of population estimates, from which Labour Force benchmarks are produced. These revisions have been incorporated into the quarterly rebenchmarking revisions. For more information, please refer to '[Net Overseas Migration revisions in Labour Force benchmarks during COVID-19 \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/apr-2020#covid-19-impacts-and-changes\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/apr-2020#covid-19-impacts-and-changes)'.'

The usual resident civilian population in March 2021 was revised down by around 0.2% (around 39,600 people). Given the largest source of revisions to population estimates and survey benchmarks are revisions to net overseas migration estimates, the largest revisions were to age groups which comprise a higher share of migration. For example, the largest revision was to the number of people age 25-29, which was revised down by around 0.7% in March 2021.

Revisions to original series also result in revisions to seasonally adjusted series.

How the end of JobKeeper will be reflected in April and May Labour Force statistics

The end of the JobKeeper wage subsidy on 28 March 2021 was expected to result in some people losing their jobs or changing jobs, and reflected in Labour Force statistics for April and May 2021. The reference period for the April survey was 4-17 April, entirely after the end of JobKeeper. The reference period for the May survey was 2-15 May, entirely outside of the 4 week period after the end of JobKeeper (which the ABS considers is the maximum time someone can be considered employed without being paid for work). Therefore, any residual impact from the end of JobKeeper should be reflected in data for May issue.

Analysis by the ABS of changes in employment and hours between March, April and May did not identify a clear aggregate impact from the end of JobKeeper. There were not large changes in the indicators that the ABS has been highlighting throughout the COVID period (eg. people working reduced or zero hours for economic reasons and flows out of employment across a broad range of population groups), in either April or May.

However, some of the underlying movements in the labour market may include some people leaving employment at the end of JobKeeper, in April or May, even if they did not result in a large discernible impact at the aggregate level.

Further information on how the Labour Force Survey questionnaire would have captured people leaving employment at the end of JobKeeper can be found in the April 2021 release.

Seasonal adjustment and trend estimates

In the April 2020 Labour Force release, the ABS advised that the method used to produce seasonally adjusted estimates would be changed from the 'concurrent' method to the 'forward factors' method, during the COVID-19 period. The forward factors approach is better suited to managing large movements at the end point of series and ensures that large movements do not have a disproportionate influence on the seasonal factors.

Given the large movements in the labour market during the COVID-19 period and the continuing use of a forward factors approach to seasonal adjustment, the ABS undertook an extensive annual review of its seasonally adjusted Labour Force series, prior to the release of April 2021 estimates.

This review followed similar reviews that are progressively being undertaken across the ABS economic statistics program. The Labour Force review identified a range of time series treatments to ensure that the seasonal adjustment process continues to be less influenced by the large month-to-month movements over the past year (and quarter-to-quarter movements for quarterly series), and more informed by seasonality before the COVID period. Revisions to most seasonally adjusted series are therefore relatively minor, but larger than would be observed through the use of concurrent seasonal adjustment (which was used prior to the COVID period, with revisions progressively made each month).

Static forward factors for the next 12 months have been calculated through this annual process and were used in the April 2021 release (and the release of May 2021 Labour Force, for quarterly series).

Survey response and timeline

The May Labour Force Survey was run in respect of the two weeks from Sunday 2 May to Saturday 15 May, and collected over the period from Sunday 9 May to Saturday 29 May.



The ABS would like to thank Australians for their continued support in responding to our

surveys during such a difficult time, given how critically important this information is.

October 2021 Labour Force statistics will be released on 11 November

In Census years, the collection and reference weeks of the Labour Force Survey may be brought forward slightly to minimise the overlap with the Post Census Review (also referred to as the Census Post Enumeration Survey). The October 2021 survey will start enumeration on Sunday 3 October, slightly earlier than the Sunday between the 5th and 11th, as stated in the [Methodology \(/methodologies/labour-force-australia-methodology/may-2021\)](#).

As a result, October 2021 Labour Force statistics will also be released a week earlier than originally advertised, on 11 November, rather than 18 November.

Articles and other information

This month's Labour Force release includes:

- [Insights into hours worked, May 2021 \(/articles/insights-hours-worked-may-2021\)](#)

For a list of previously published LFS articles, see the [Article archive \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release#article-archive\)](#).

Additional spreadsheets and pivot tables are published in [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release\)](#) one week after this release, while longitudinal labour force microdata are released in the ABS DataLab, one day after the detailed release (see [Microdata: Longitudinal Labour Force, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6602.0History+of+Changes0Australia\)](#)).

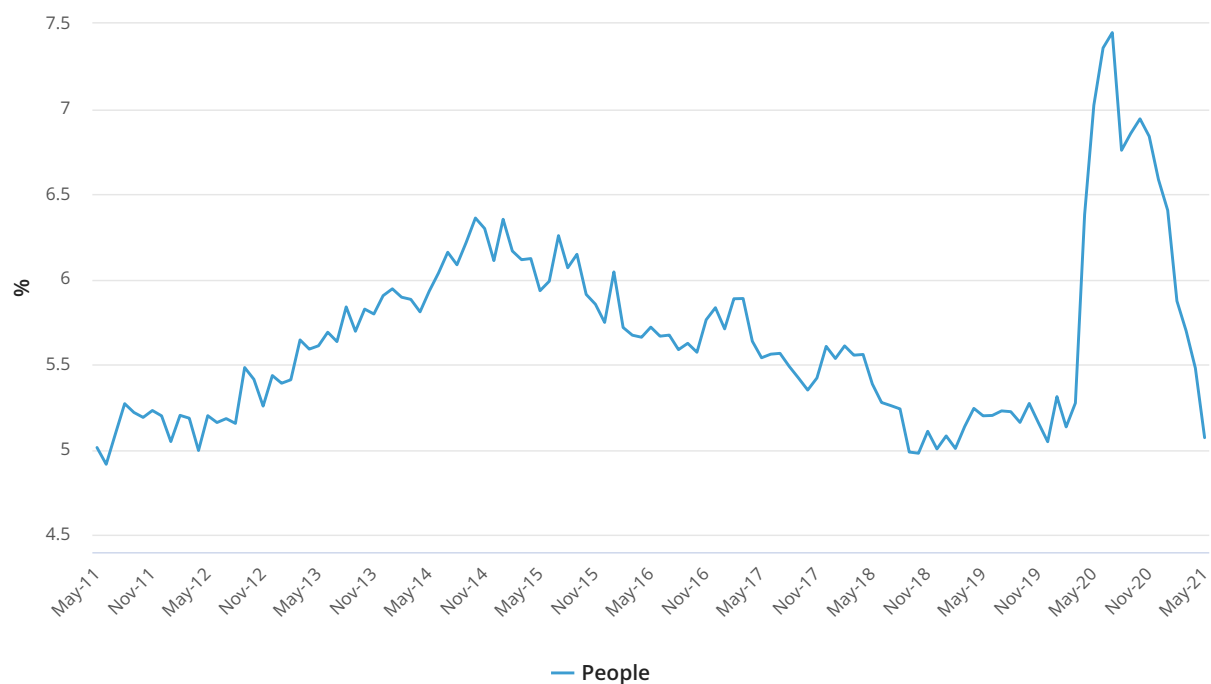
Unemployment

In seasonally adjusted terms, in May 2021:

- The unemployment rate decreased by 0.4 pts to 5.1%
- The unemployment rate was 1.9 pts lower than May 2020, and 0.2 pts lower than March 2020

- Unemployed people decreased by 53,000 to 701,100
- Unemployed people decreased by 215,400 from May 2020 and was 22,400 lower than March 2020
- The youth unemployment rate increased by 0.1 pts to 10.7%
- The youth unemployment rate was 5.1 pts lower than May 2020, and 0.9 pts lower than March 2020

Unemployment rate, Seasonally adjusted



Employment

In seasonally adjusted terms, in May 2021:

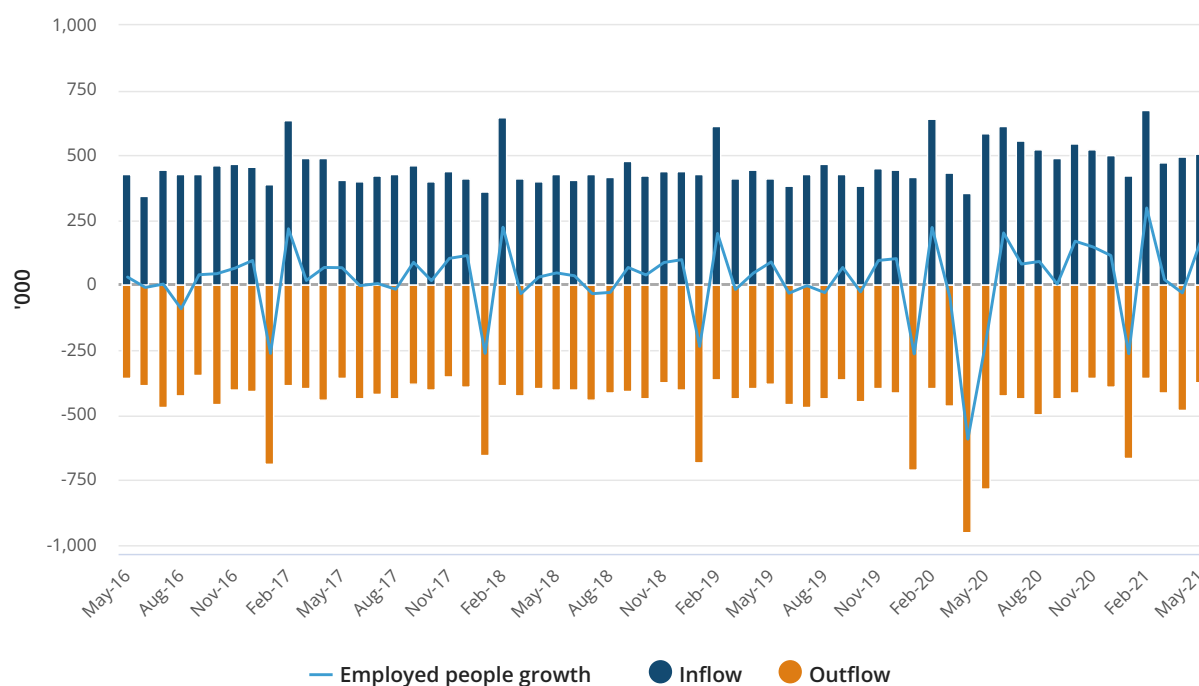
- Employment increased by 115,200 people (0.9%) to 13,125,100 people
- Over the year to May 2021, employment increased by 987,200 people (8.1%)
- Employment was 130,400 people (1.0%) higher than March 2020

Flows into and out of employment

Flows into and out of employment are extensive and are based on the net matched sample of original employment growth between two consecutive months (around 80% of the sample). The (net) sum of the inflows and outflows does not necessarily equal the 'net' employment growth.

For May 2021 the net increase in the number of employed people is the result of around 510,000 people entered employment (i.e. they were not employed in April but were employed in May), while around 370,000 people left employment (i.e. they were employed in April but were not employed in May). This contrasts with April 2021 where around 500,000 people entered employment and around 480,000 people left employment.

Monthly inflows, outflows and employment growth, Original

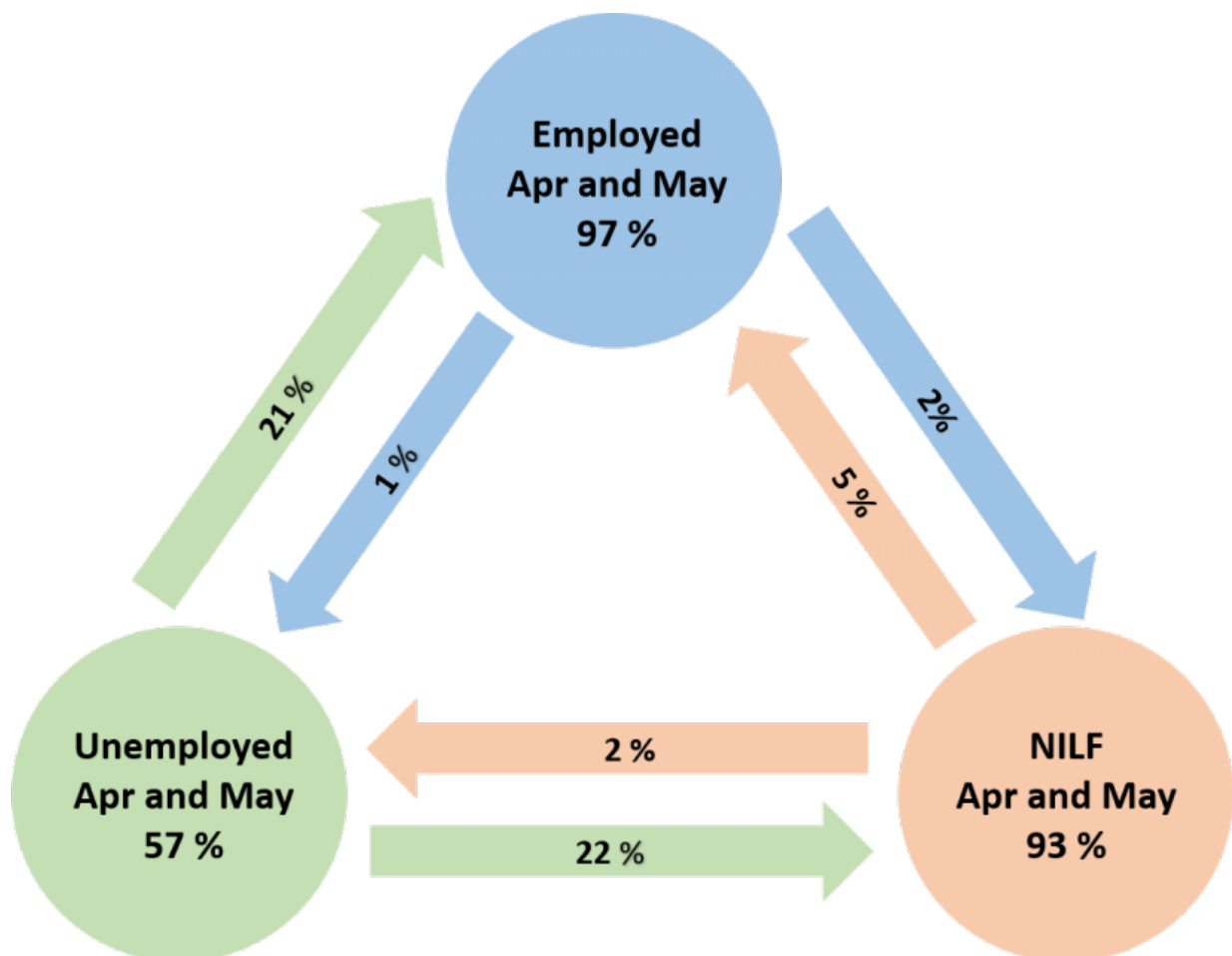


Note: As the inflows and outflows analysis is based on the matched sample (around 80% of the sample), and the original employment growth is based on the entire sample and the latest months weight, the (net) sum of the inflows and outflows does not necessarily equal the 'net' employment growth.

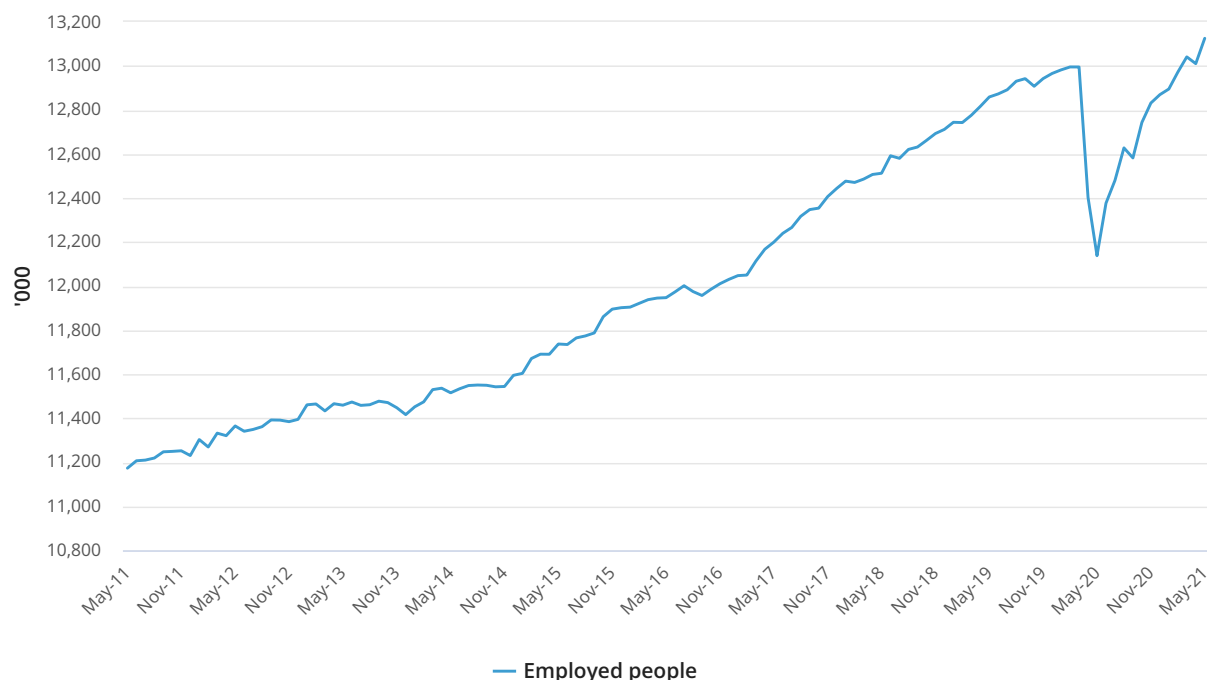
The following diagram shows the proportion of people moving between employment, unemployment and not in the labour force between April and May (based on the matched sample). It shows that:

- 97% of people employed in April were also employed in May (with 1% moving to unemployment and 2% to not in the labour force)
- 57% of people unemployed in April were also unemployed in May (with 21% moving to employment and 22% to not in the labour force)
- 93% of people not in the labour force in April were also not in the labour force in May (with 5% moving to employment and 2% to unemployment)

Flows in labour force status, April to May



Employed people, Seasonally adjusted



Full-time and part-time employment

In seasonally adjusted terms, in May 2021:

- Full-time employment increased by 97,500 to 8,965,200 people, and part-time employment increased by 17,700 to 4,160,000 people
- Over the year to May 2021, full-time employment increased by 421,300 people and part-time employment increased by 565,900 people
- The part-time share of employment was 31.7%, 0.1 pts lower than in March 2020 and 2.1 pts higher than this time last year.

Employment-to-population ratio

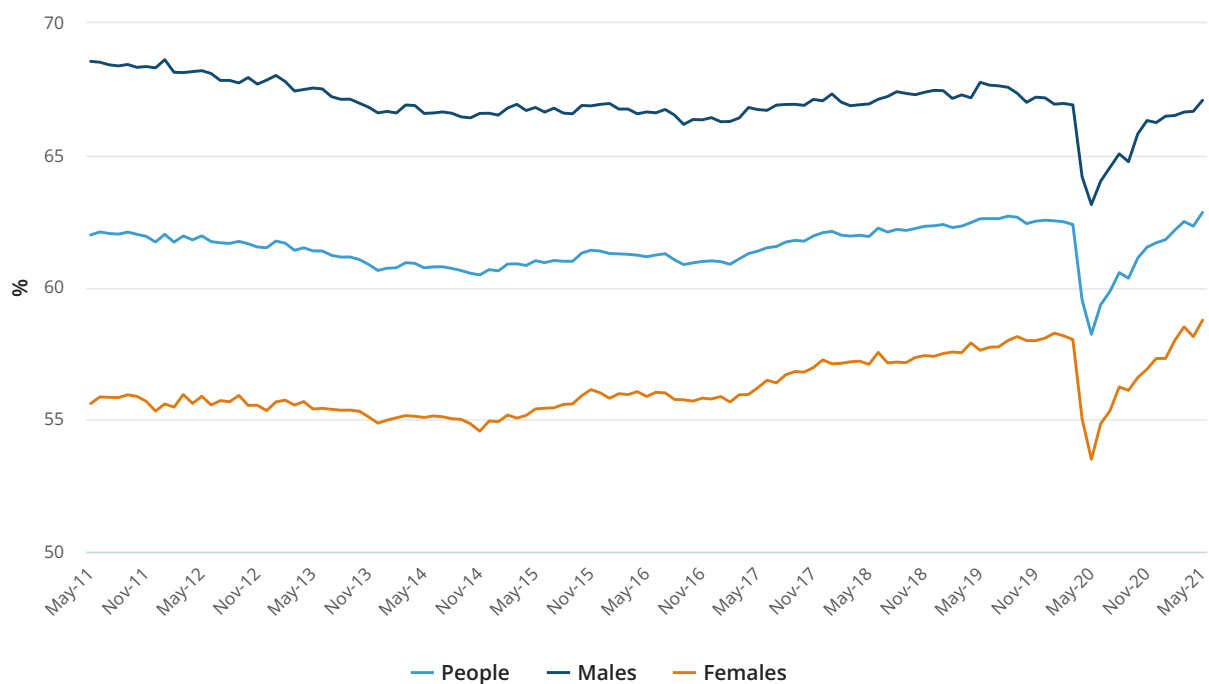
In seasonally adjusted terms, in May 2021, the employment-to-population ratio:

- Increased by 0.5 pts to 62.8%

- Increased by 4.6 pts from the same time last year, and was 0.5 pts higher than March 2020.

The employment-to-population ratio provides a measure of employment relative to the size of the population.

Employment-to-population ratio, Seasonally adjusted



Hours worked

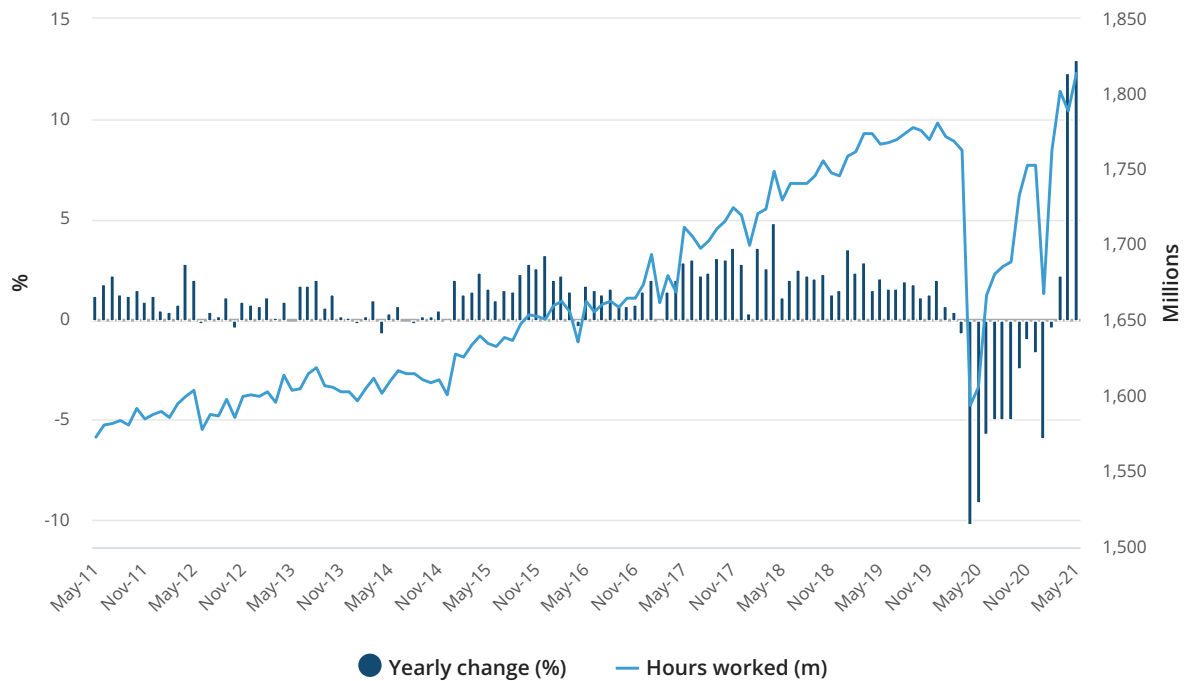
In seasonally adjusted terms, in May 2021, monthly hours worked in all jobs :

- Increased by 25.2 million hours (1.4%) to 1,814 million hours
- Increased by 13.0% over the year, which is larger than the 8.1% increase in employed people
- Increased 51.6 million hours (2.9%) from March 2020

See the article [Insights into hours worked \(/articles/insights-hours-worked-may-2021\)](/articles/insights-hours-worked-may-2021) for

more.

Monthly hours worked in all jobs, Seasonally adjusted

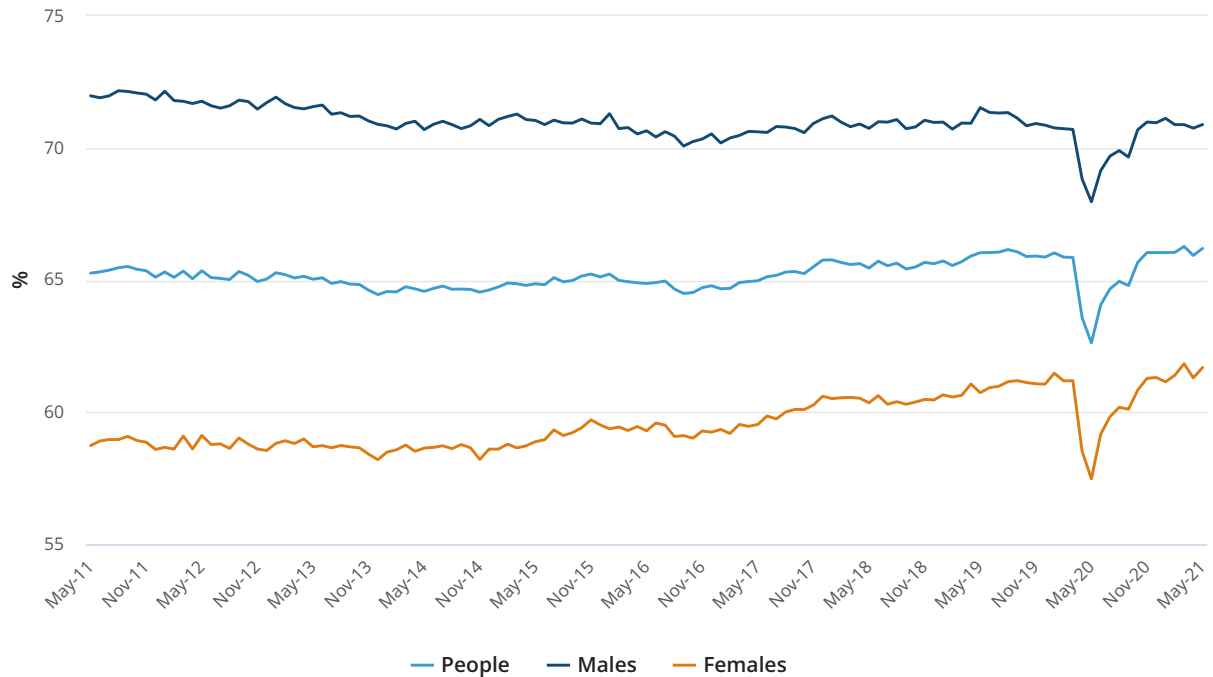


Participation

In seasonally adjusted terms, in May 2021, the participation rate:

- Increased by 0.3 pts to 66.2%
- Increased by 0.1 pts for men to 70.9% and increased by 0.4 pts for women to 61.7%
- Increased by 3.6 pts over the year to May 2021, and was 0.3 pts higher than March 2020

Participation rate, Seasonally adjusted

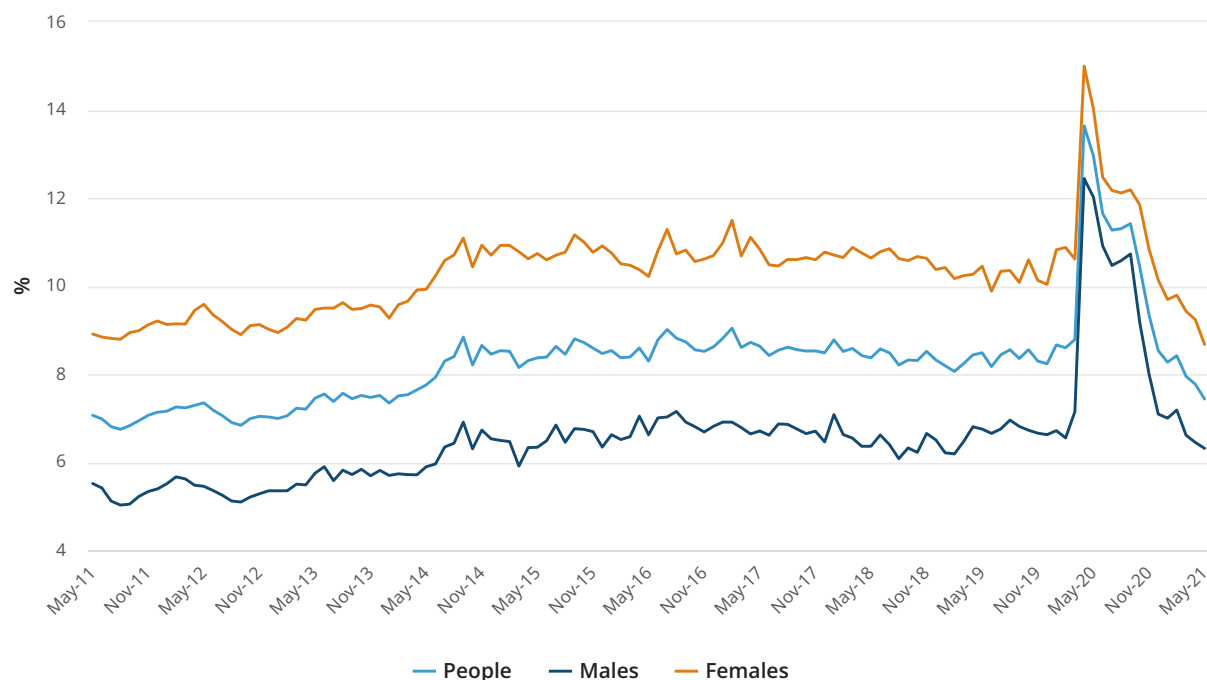


Underemployment

In seasonally adjusted terms, in May 2021:

- The underemployment rate decreased by 0.3 pts to 7.4%
- The underemployment rate was 5.5 pts lower than May 2020, and 1.4 pts lower than March 2020
- The underutilisation rate decreased by 0.7 pts to 12.5%

Underemployment rate, Seasonally adjusted



States and territories

May 2021, Seasonally adjusted

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory
Employed people	4,164,000	3,453,700	2,644,600	871,100	1,391,800	259,600	
Employed people - monthly change	1.8%	0.9%	1.2%	0.8%	0.1%	0.7%	
Employment to population ratio	62.7%	63.4%	63.0%	59.6%	64.6%	57.9%	
Employment to population ratio - monthly change	1.1 pts	0.5 pts	0.7 pts	0.4 pts	0.0 pts	0.4 pts	

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	North Territory
Unemployment rate	5.0%	4.8%	5.4%	5.8%	4.7%	5.7%	
Unemployment rate - monthly change	-0.5 pts	-0.7 pts	-0.7 pts	0.1 pts	-0.3 pts	-0.5 pts	
Underemployment rate	7.3%	7.7%	7.7%	7.8%	7.2%	9.0%	
Underemployment rate - monthly change	-0.3 pts	0.1 pts	-0.8 pts	-0.5 pts	0.1 pts	0.4 pts	
Participation rate	66.0%	66.6%	66.6%	63.3%	67.8%	61.4%	
Participation rate - monthly change	0.9 pts	0.1 pts	0.3 pts	0.5 pts	-0.2 pts	0.1 pts	

Rotation group analysis

Sample composition and rotation

The Labour Force Survey sample can be thought of as comprising eight sub-samples (rotation groups), with each sub-sample remaining in the survey for eight months, and one group "rotating out" each month and being replaced by a new group "rotating in". As seven-eighths of the sample are common from one month to the next, changes in the estimates reflect real changes in the labour market, rather than changes in the sample. The replacement sample is generally selected from the same geographic areas as the outgoing one, as part of a representative sampling approach.

The sample comprises three components:

- the matched common sample (people who responded in both the current month and previous month)
- the unmatched common sample (people who responded in the current month but who did not respond in the previous month, or vice versa)
- the incoming rotation group (replacing people who rotated out)

The matched common sample describes the change observed for the same respondents in the current and previous month, while the other two components reflect differences between the aggregate labour force status of different groups of people.

While the rotation groups are designed to be representative of the population, the outgoing

and incoming rotation groups will almost always have somewhat different characteristics, as they reflect different households and people. The design of the survey, including the weighting and estimation processes, ensures that these differences are generally relatively minor and do not affect the representativeness of the survey and its estimates. Monthly estimates are designed to be representative, regardless of the relative contribution of the three components of the sample.

The contributions of the three sample components to the original estimates of employed, unemployed and not in the labour force are in the Contribution from sample components to estimates spreadsheet.

Estimates for the incoming and outgoing rotation groups

Incoming and outgoing rotation groups

	April outgoing rotation group	May incoming rotation group	May outgoing rotation group	May estimate (Original)
Employment to population ratio	63.3%	64.4%	62.8%	63.1%
Full-time employment to population ratio	43.6%	42.7%	42.8%	42.8%
Unemployment rate	4.9%	4.7%	5.0%	5.0%
Participation rate	66.6%	67.5%	66.1%	66.5%

States and territories

In addition to analysis across the entire sample, the ABS also undertakes similar analysis for the responding sample in each state and territory each month, and highlights where there is a notable change for users to be aware of. For example, in April 2021, the incoming rotation group in New South Wales and Queensland had a lower employment to population ratio than the group it replaced, but was more similar to the rest of the sample in April. As with any notable month-to-month movement of this nature in state and territory estimates, the ABS recommends exercising a degree of caution in interpreting short-term changes.

As for its reporting for the entire sample, where the ABS has not highlighted a notable incoming rotation group effect, any larger changes should therefore be considered to reflect a broader change across the sample.

Managing COVID-19 impacts on the incoming rotation groups

In response to COVID-19 and the suspension of face-to-face interviewing, the ABS boosted the size of sample for the incoming rotation groups from June to December 2020 to ensure response level were around the same as pre-COVID-19 rotation groups. This has ensured a comparable level of fully responding households to the pre-COVID period.

Between April and September 2020 additional weighting treatments were used to effectively account for a slightly higher level of non-response. No such treatment was required after September, with the response patterns returning close to the pre-COVID period.

Comparability with seasonally adjusted data

The gross flows and rotation group data are in original terms only, and are included to provide additional information on the month-to-month movements. They have a considerable level of inherent sampling variability, which is specifically adjusted for in the seasonally adjusted series.

While trend data usually provides the best measure of the underlying behaviour of the labour market, in times of large changes in the labour market, seasonally adjusted data provides a better estimate of the most recent months. The ABS has temporarily suspended the trend series until labour market indicators become more stable, see [Suspension of trend series and changes to seasonal adjustment during the COVID-19 period \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/apr-2020#covid-19-impacts-and-changes\)](#).

Contribution from sample components to estimates

[↓ Download XLSX](#)

[41.36 KB]

Data downloads

Labour Force Survey results are released in three stages.

1. Spreadsheets of the headline indicators are published in this release
2. Additional, more detailed spreadsheets and pivot tables are published in [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release\)](#) one week after this first release
3. Longitudinal labour force microdata are released in the ABS DataLab on a

monthly basis, one day after the detailed release (see [Microdata: Longitudinal Labour Force, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6602.0History+of+Changes0Australia\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6602.0History+of+Changes0Australia))

See the [Survey output \(/methodologies/labour-force-australia-methodology/may-2021#survey-output\)](/methodologies/labour-force-australia-methodology/may-2021#survey-output) section of Labour Force, Australia methodology for more information.

Labour Force status

Table 1. Labour force status by Sex, Australia - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)
[7.01 MB]

Table 4. Labour force status by Sex, New South Wales - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)
[4.29 MB]

Table 5. Labour force status by Sex, Victoria - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)
[4.31 MB]

Table 6. Labour force status by Sex, Queensland - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)
[4.33 MB]

Table 7. Labour force status by Sex, South Australia - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)
[4.34 MB]

Table 8. Labour force status by Sex, Western Australia - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)
[4.33 MB]

Table 9. Labour force status by Sex, Tasmania - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)
[4.54 MB]

Table 10. Labour force status by Sex, Northern Territory - Trend and Original

[!\[\]\(cead67df4d82d6c83effe4f8699a7d8f_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[5.16 MB]

Table 10a. Labour force status by Sex, Northern Territory - Seasonally adjusted

[!\[\]\(4729e517bc6a7cd81c8025b9646574fb_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[278 KB]

Table 11. Labour force status by Sex, Australian Capital Territory - Trend and Original

[!\[\]\(cbe2492b119e39e02a1dab2af4a4b296_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[4.46 MB]

Table 11a. Labour force status by Sex, Australian Capital Territory - Seasonally adjusted

[!\[\]\(5361750c22c4e047a52f4eac1ec2d4cc_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[278 KB]

Table 12. Labour force status by Sex, State and Territory - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[!\[\]\(0d5ec72f61334709c3fc9450209b754f_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[42.25 MB]

Table 12a. Labour force status by Sex, Territory - Seasonally adjusted

[!\[\]\(2bae76de5ebbd5c4d7d47162f1673734_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[484.5 KB]

Table 13. Labour force status for 15-24 year olds by Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[!\[\]\(28f72b996fc97883dfd9d4e8b1b16b4e_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[7 MB]

Table 15. Labour force status for 15-24 year olds by Educational attendance (full-time) and Sex

[!\[\]\(c15650232aa6660c9deb34f3b82dcb72_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[1.61 MB]

Table 16. Labour force status for 15-24 year olds by State, Territory and Educational attendance (full-time)

[!\[\]\(a25a22d88c5882f4a20f36103df86562_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[8.53 MB]

Table 17. Labour force status for 15-19 year olds by Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[!\[\]\(0aaea5eb29549a0c507a518cbdd818a0_img.jpg\) Download XLS](#)

[5.37 MB]

Table 18. Labour force status for 15-64 year olds by Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[7 MB]

Hours worked

Table 19. Monthly hours worked in all jobs by Employed full-time, part-time and Sex and by State and Territory - Trend and Seasonally adjusted

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[3.11 MB]

Table 19a. Monthly hours worked in all jobs by Employed full-time, part-time and Sex and Territory - Seasonally adjusted

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[93 KB]

Table 21. Quarterly hours worked in all jobs by Market and Non-market sector - Seasonally adjusted

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[81 KB]

Underemployment and underutilisation

Table 22. Underutilised persons by Age and Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[46.39 MB]

Table 23. Underutilised persons by State and Territory and Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[62.7 MB]

Table 23a. Underutilised persons by Territory and Sex - Seasonally adjusted

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[720.5 KB]

Table 24. Underutilised persons by Age and Sex (expanded analytical series)

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[797.5 KB]

Table 25. Underutilised persons by State, Territory and Sex (expanded analytical series)

[↓ Download XLS](#)

[664.5 KB]

Flows into and out of employment

GM1 - Labour force status and Gross changes (flows) by Age, Sex, State and Territory, February 1991 onwards

↓ [Download XLSX](#)

[79.95 MB]

All time series spreadsheets

All time series spreadsheets

↓ [Download ZIP](#)

[42.31 MB]

Article archive

Understanding the labour force

[Understanding full-time and part-time work \(/articles/understanding-full-time-and-part-time-work\)](#) (January 2021)

[Understanding differences between Labour Force employment statistics and Weekly Payroll Jobs \(/articles/understanding-differences-between-labour-force-employment-statistics-and-weekly-payroll-jobs\)](#) (April 2020)

[Classifying people during the COVID-19 period \(https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/classifying-people-labour-force-survey-during-covid-19-period\)](#) (March 2020)

[Labour Force Explained \(/articles/labour-force-explained\)](#) (September 2017)

[Understanding the Australian labour force using ABS statistics \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features999Dec%202013\)](#) (December 2013)

[Understanding full-time / part-time status in the Labour Force Survey \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features4Sep%202013\)](#) (September 2013)

[Employment level estimates versus employment to population ratio explained \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features2Jan%202012\)](#) (January 2012)

Employment and jobs

[Changing female employment over time \(/articles/changing-female-employment-over-time\)](#) (February 2021)

[Insights into casual employment, occupation and industry \(https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/insights-casual-employment-occupation-and-industry\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/insights-casual-employment-occupation-and-industry) (November 2020)

[Strong employment growth for non-employees \(/articles/strong-employment-growth-non-employees\)](/articles/strong-employment-growth-non-employees) (August 2020)

[State and territory employment and hours worked \(/articles/state-and-territory-employment-and-hours-worked\)](/articles/state-and-territory-employment-and-hours-worked) (August 2020)

[Employment and unemployment: An International Perspective \(/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective\)](/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective) (August 2020)

[Flows into and out of employment and unemployment \(/articles/flows-and-out-employment-and-unemployment\)](/articles/flows-and-out-employment-and-unemployment) (June 2020)

[Insights into industry and occupation \(/articles/insights-industry-and-occupation\)](/articles/insights-industry-and-occupation) (May 2020)

[Employment and unemployment: An international perspective \(/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective-may-2020\)](/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective-may-2020) (May 2020)

[Employment and unemployment: An international perspective \(/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective-april-2020\)](/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective-april-2020) (April 2020)

[People moving into or out of employment or unemployment every month \(/articles/people-moving-or-out-employment-or-unemployment-every-month\)](/articles/people-moving-or-out-employment-or-unemployment-every-month) (March 2020)

[How many people work one hour a week \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features3Jan%202019\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features3Jan%202019) (January 2019)

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